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ABSTRACT

Little is known about the implications of individual differences in privacy preferences. To explore the relationship between privacy preferences and the style and quality of social interaction in a first encounter, 77 of 320 college students completing the Privacy Preference Scale were grouped according to their low (20 male, 20 female) or high (17 male, 20 female) need for privacy. Subjects were tested for extraversion-introversion and anxiety level; measures of interpersonal attraction and interpersonal behavior were also administered. Situational demands on privacy were varied by means of a self-disclosure task in which subjects discussed relatively intimate or non-intimate topics. The findings showed that for those with high compared to low privacy preference, interaction with a stranger was rated as significantly more awkward, tense, and unnatural. High privacy individuals used significantly fewer verbal reinforcements when speaking with strangers than did low privacy individuals. The manipulation of situational demands upon privacy did not significantly affect interpersonal attraction or interaction. The results support previous research suggesting that people with high preference for privacy may interact less and be less comfortable with a stranger than people with a low privacy preference. Such individuals may benefit from interpersonal skills training. (JAC)

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Need for Privacy and Its Effect Upon Interpersonal Attraction and Interaction

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Running Head: Need for Privacy

Abstract

The present study explored the implications of variations in privacy preferences for the quality and style of interpersonal behavior in an initial encounter situation. The influence of situational variations in privacy upon interpersonal behavior was also examined. It was hypothesized that: (a) persons with a high preference for privacy would be less attracted to and interact less with a stranger than people with a low preference; and, (b) differences between privacy preference groups (high versus low) in attraction and interaction would be greater in a situation which places high rather than low demands upon privacy. The research design was a 2 (privacy preference) by 2 (situational demand) by 2 (gender) design. Situational demands upon privacy were varied by means of a self-disclosure task in which subjects discussed relatively intimate or non-intimate topics.

The findings showed that for those with high compared with low privacy preference, interaction with a stranger was rated as significantly more awkward, tense, and unnatural. High privacy individuals verbally reinforced speaking by the strangers significantly less than low privacy individuals. The manipulation of situational demands upon privacy did not significantly affect interpersonal attraction or interaction. The results of this study support previous research which has suggested that people with high preference for privacy may interact less and be less comfortable with a stranger than people with a low preference. The implications of these findings for relationship development and interpersonal skills training was discussed.

Privacy can be defined as an outcome of a person's wish to withhold from others certain knowledge as to his/her past, present or future experience and action (Altman, 1974). Past research on privacy has concerned itself with changes in the definition of privacy as a function of development (Wolfe & Laufer, 1974), changes in privacy preferences as a result of environmental changes (Aloai, 1973, Pastalan, 1979, & Wolfe & Rivlin, 1971), and the relationship between privacy preferences and antecedent environmental variables like family size and crowding, and also personality variables (Marshall, 1972). Another group of studies has dealt with environmental/spatial variables like number and size of bedrooms, room density (number of people in a room per square foot) and their relationship to perceived privacy (Park, 1979; Smith, et al, 1979).

Little is known about the implications of individual differences in privacy preferences for the way people structure their social interactions, nor the implications of privacy preferences for effectiveness in interpersonal interactions. It has been generally assumed that privacy should be protected and that invasion of privacy may cause psychological harm and lead to impaired interpersonal functioning (Altman, 1974; Jourard, 1966). However, the relationships between privacy preference, privacy invasion, and social interaction have not been determined. On one hand, it is possible that privacy preferences reflect primarily a need to control the amount of social interaction rather than affecting the quality of social interaction. Alternatively, as suggested by some of the personality correlates of preferred privacy (Marshall, 1972), interpersonal style and and skills may also be associated with need for privacy. Marshall (1972)

found that people with a high need for privacy when compared to those with a low need for privacy tended to be introverted rather than extraverted, logical and analytic rather than sympathetic and feeling, to have little desire for inclusion in groups, and to express or need little affection. These personality correlates of privacy preferences suggest that privacy preference might affect the quality of social interaction.

It is also likely that situational demands on privacy influence the quality of interaction, and that this is true to a greater extent for those with high compared with low privacy preferences. Beardsley (1971), Gross (1971), and Pennock and Chapman (1971) consider violations of privacy as potentially harmful because they can threaten individual autonomy, self respect, and in a sense demean the worth of a person. Goffman (1961) and Jourard (1966) pointed to the critical effect of a mental patient's privacy on self-identity and self-esteem.

The present study was designed to explore (a) the relationship between privacy preferences and the style and quality of social interaction in a dyadic, first encounter situation, and (b) the influence of situational variations in privacy upon social interaction. Based upon the correlates of privacy preferences identified by Marshall (1972) and upon the implications of privacy preference for interpersonal behavior from the discussion of Goffman (1961) and Jourard (1966), it was anticipated that individuals with high privacy preferences compared with those having low preferences would express less attraction for a stranger and would be rated as less competent in interaction skills. Further, it was anticipated that privacy preference level would interact with situational demands upon privacy such

that differences in social interaction between high and low privacy preference groups would be greater following an intimate self disclosure task than following a nonintimate self disclosure task. This prediction was based upon the presumption that a greater amount of discomfort and anxiety would be experienced by persons with a high need for privacy, compared to low need for privacy in an intimate self disclosure task.

In summary, the hypotheses were:

1. Persons with a high need for privacy will exhibit less attraction for a stranger, a lower level of interaction with a stranger, and less competence in social skills than persons with a low need for privacy.

2. Differences between privacy preference groups in attraction for a stranger and social interaction will be greater in a situation which places high compared with low demands upon privacy.

Method

Subjects

Subjects for this study were 77 undergraduate students attending introductory family relations courses at Texas Tech University. One group 20 male, 20 female) consisted of individuals with a low need for privacy, and another included individuals with a high need for privacy (17 males, 20 females). Of a total of 320 students completing the Privacy Preference Scale (PPS), the 40 scoring the highest on the PPS were placed in the high-need for privacy group (Mean = 340.60, S.D. = 10.97), the 40 lowest students were placed in the low-need for privacy group (Mean = 276.40), S.D. = 11.30). Three male students in the high-need for privacy group were unable to participate in the study.

Measures

Privacy preference. Students were tested using the Privacy Preference Scale (PPS) developed by Marshall (1972). This scale is the only one of its kind for use in measuring privacy preference. It has a reliability of .72 (coefficient alpha) (Marshall, 1972). The PPS consists of 93 items presented as a summative scale with five response alternatives for each item ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale includes six subscales: Neighboring, Seclusion, Solitude, Anonymity, Reserve, and Intimacy.

Extraversion-introversion. Because introversion is related to a high need for privacy (Marshall, 1972) and low interpersonal interaction (Myers, 1962), the Extraversion-Introversion (E-I) subscale of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (M-BTI) was administered so that scores would be available for use as a covariate. The E-I subscale of the M-BTI is designed to measure ease in and liking for interpersonal contact. Split-half reliability (Spearman-Brown formula) for the E-I subscale is .81. A test-retest correlation of .70 has been reported (Myers-Briggs, 1962).

Anxiety level. In a situation which places high demands on privacy an individual should experience more anxiety than in a low-demand situation. In order to measure the level of anxiety after the initial 5-minute periods described below, each person completed the Affect Adjective Check List (AACL), a 61-item quick measurement scale of general anxiety level (Zuckerman, 1960). Internal consistency for this scale is .72 (Kuder-Richardson Formula 20), and test-retest reliability is .85 (Zuckerman, 1960).

Interpersonal attraction and behavior measures. The first measure of interpersonal attraction was an instrument consisting of 17-bipolar adjective dimensions (e.g., exciting-dull, genuine-artificial, friendly-unfriendly) developed by Ickes and Barnes (1978) to measure interpersonal attraction. Each individual was asked to rate the stranger on these dimensions. The person's ratings on each of the 17 adjective pairs was summed to obtain a global index of attraction to or liking of the confederate.

The second questionnaire was the Interpersonal Judgement Scale (IJS) (Byrne, 1971) which measures a person's desire to have some future interaction with a partner. The two attraction items include the degree to which he/she would like to know the stranger better in the future. The two items are measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (most negative) to 7 (most positive) and are summed to constitute this measure of interpersonal attraction. Byrne and Nelson (1965) reported a split-half reliability on the scale of .85. With respect to other verbal measures, IJS attraction responses have been found to be negatively related to ratings of social distance (Schwartz, 1966). Nonverbal indices of attraction, including standing and seating proximity (Byrne, Baskett, & Hodges, 1971), and visual interaction (Efran, 1969) were also positively related to the IJS measure of attraction.

The third measure of attraction was designed to assess the person's level of satisfaction with his/her interaction. Based on a 21-point scale from "not at all" to "extremely," students were asked to answer the following six questions taking the perspective of both themselves (3

questions) and the stranger (3 questions): (a) "To what degree did the interaction seem awkward, forced, and strained to (you/the other person)?" (b) "To what degree did the interaction seem smooth, natural, and relaxed to (you/the other person)?" and (c) "How much rapport did (you/the other person) feel with (the other person/you)?" An overall measure of satisfaction with the interaction was obtained by subtracting the two ratings on the first item from the sum of their ratings on the two ratings of both the second and third items. In using the measure Ickes, et. al (1979) reported that the items were moderately intercorrelated ($\underline{r}_{12}$ = -.58 to -.78, $\underline{r}_{23}$ = .40 to .48, $\underline{r}_{13}$ = .22 to -.37).

Interpersonal behavior in the dyads was coded from videotaped data. Behavioral indices developed by Ickes and Barnes (1978) for measuring the quantity and quality of interpersonal interaction in same-sex dyads was used. These behavioral indicators included: (a) total duration of verbalization; (b) frequency of verbal reinforcers that indicate attention to, understanding of, or agreement with the stranger (e.g., oh really, I see, un-huh, me too); (c) the total duration of directed gazes where the individual looks directly toward the stranger's face; (d) duration of laughter by the person; (e) frequency of laughter by the person; (f) total frequency of expressive gestures which include gross arm and hand movements that appear to supplement verbailzation; (g) total duration of expressive gestures; and, (h) frequency of questions.

In addition to coding the behavioral indicators, judges rated the quality of interaction within each of the dyads. On a 21-point scale ranging from "not at all" to "extremely," each judge independently rated

the degree to which the observed interactions seemsed smooth, natural, and relaxed. Lamke (1979) found this to be a good overall rating of interaction ease in same-sex dyads.

In order to establish reliable ratings of the behavioral measures, two male and two female judges were trained to rate the behavioral interaction recorded on videotape. Two of the judges (one male and one female) rated duration of verbalizations, frequency of verbal reinforcers, duration of directed gazes, and frequency of laughter. The other two judges rated duration of laughter, frequency of gestures, duration of gestures, frequency of questions and quality of interaction. Each judge independently rated fifteen videotapes and interrater reliability for each set of two raters, using Pearson's r for the various measures was: r = .92 for duration of verbalizations; r = .96 for frequency of verbal reinforcers; r = .91 for duration of directed gazes; r = .96 for frequency of laughter; r = .95 for duration of laughter; r = .98 for frequency of gestures; r = .92 for duration of gestures; r = .99 for frequency of questions; and, r = .93 for quality of interaction. All judges were blind as to the purpose of the study and to the level of need for privacy of the students.

Procedure

The Privacy Preference Scale (PPS) was administered to 320 students (108 males and 212 females) in their classrooms. The 40 highest scoring males and females and the 40 lowest scoring males and females were selected from the initial group of 320 students to participate in the study. Following identification of high and low scoring students on the PPS, one-half of the high and low scoring students were randomly assigned to Task I and the

other half to Task II.

Each student was instructed to discuss three topics "which have been determined to be important to college students" with a confederate. He/she was given 5 minutes to discuss these topics and were instructed not to ask the confederate questions. A timer was provided and each student was instructed to discuss each topic for approximately 1½ minutes.

Sixty-eight topics were pre-rated by 80 undergraduate students (N = 38 males, 42 females) for level of infringement upon their privacy. Each topic was rated on a 7-point scale from 1: "not an invasion of my privacy at all" to 7: "an extreme invasion of my privacy." Topics selected for Task I had a mean rating of 5.83 (S.D. = 1.2.) for males and 5.71 (S.D. = 1.09) for females. Task I (low privacy) consisted of a 5-minute period in which the person was asked to self-disclose to a "stranger" (confederate) on 3 topics which had been determined to be intimate subjects to college students. For the males the topics were: "what birth control methods I would use in marriage," "times I have cheated on my girlfriend," "lies I've told my parents." For the females the topics were: "things I dislike about my mother," "times I have been tempted to steal something," and "why some people dislike me." After the initial 5-minute period the students and confederate were asked to complete the Affect Adjective Check List (AACL). To increase the honesty of the students in completing the AACL, the experimenter asked the confederate to come out of the room for a moment. While the confederate then re-entered the room and the experimenter collected the scales and told the student he would "be right back." At this time the student was video-taped for a 5-minute period. At the end of this period the

student was asked to complete the three interpersonal attraction questionnaires. Behavior interaction was rated later using the videotapes.

The procedures for Task II (high privacy) were exactly the same as described above except that both male and female students were asked to self-disclose on three topics that were judged to be lowest on intimacy (Mean = 1.20, S.D. = .89 for men and Mean = 1.39, S.D. = 0.77 for women): "places I have lived," "the number of brothers and sisters I have," and "things that interest me." At the end of the 5-minute period the experimenter administered the AACL as in the experimental procedure. The remainder fo the control procedure was exactly the same as that used in the experimental situation.

In both tasks the confederate was given instructions to only listen during the initial 5-minute period. During the last 5-minute unstructured period the confederate was instructed to: (a) let the other person speak first; (b) be friendly but do not ask the other person questions; and (c) do not give long answers to questions the other person asks. These procedures were utilized to control for the different effects the confederate might have on the behavioral interaction if he/she was allowed to freely interact with the student. A total of 4 confederates was used (2 male and 2 female). They were assigned to an equal number of sessions with each type of student and in each situation. Same sex dyads were utilized through the study.

Before debriefing, each person was asked to rate how much the situation had involved an infringement on his/her privacy. This was done to further verify that the situational manipulations had accomplished their goals.

After this the person was debriefed on the purpose of the experiment.

Results

The design for this study was a 2 (privacy preference) by 2 (situation) by 2 (sex of subject) design with n's of 10 in all but one cell which had n = 7. The data were analyzed by a series of 2 x 2 x 2 analyses. In order to control the experimentwise alpha level at $p < .05$ no individual effects were considered to be significant unless $p < .012$ (Haase, Note 1). Haase's method for determining alpha is based upon the number of dependent variables, the degree of intercorrelation between the dependent variables, and the sample size. Each of the behavioral interaction variables was transformed to either two or three categories due to the nature of the distribution of these variables.[1]

It was originally anticipated that introversion would be significantly related to interpersonal interaction. Its effects were to be controlled through covariance analyses. However, introversion did not correlate significantly with any of the measures of interpersonal attraction and interaction (r's ranged from .01 to .16), and thus it was not included as a variable in subsequent analyses.

Privacy Preferences

Interpersonal attraction. The relationship between privacy preference and interpersonal attraction was assessed using three separate measures of interpersonal satisfaction. No significant differences were found between low and high privacy preference groups. Therefore, although the means of the high privacy group were all lower on these measures than those of the low privacy group, it cannot be concluded that people with a high need for privacy are less attracted to a stranger than those with a low

need for privacy.

Behavioral interaction. The relationship between privacy preference and behavioral interaction was assessed using the eight previously identified behavioral indicators for the privacy preference groups. Means and standard deviations on the behavior interaction indicators for the privacy preference groups are presented in Table 1. All means were in the expected direction on behavioral interaction variables.

Insert Table 1 about here

Results indicated that individuals with a high need for privacy used verbal reinforcers significantly less than did individuals with a low need for privacy, F (1,67) = 6.53, $p < .012$. The difference between the groups in the duration of verbalizations and frequency of questions approached significance with the high need for privacy individuals verbalizing less than the low need for privacy ones, F (1,67) = 4.49, $p < .037$) and asking fewer questions, F (1,67) = 5.59, $p < .021$. There was a similar trend in duration of directed gaze, duration of laughter and frequency of laughter, although the differences were not significant.

Relative to the raters' perceptions of the interactions there was a significant difference between the high and low privacy people, F (1,78) = 7.17, $p < .009$. Raters perceived the interaction in which there were high privacy people to be less natural, relaxed and smooth compared to interactions involving low privacy individuals.

Interaction of Privacy Preference and Situational Demands Upon Privacy

In order to measure the effectiveness of the task manipulations, each individual was asked at the end of the second 5-minute free interaction to rate on a seven-point scale the degree to which the first 5-minute inter-

action was an infringement on his/her privacy. Task I individuals reported a significantly greater degree of infringement upon their privacy (Mean = 3.53) than did Task II individuals (Mean = 213), $t(68) = 3.52$, $p < .0008$. However, the two groups' self-reported anxiety scores did not follow this same trend. There was no significant difference between Task I (Mean = 8.74) and Task II (Mean = 8.91) on the anxiety test $t(74) = 0.17$, $p < .860$. Thus, it appears that the experimental manipulation was successful in creating variation in perceived infringement upon privacy, but there was not an associated difference in anxiety.

Interpersonal attraction. The effects of situational variations in privacy and need for privacy upon interpersonal attraction was assessed using the same three measures of interpersonal attraction as described above. Analyses of variance showed no significant differences on the attraction indices as a function of the interaction of situation and need for privacy. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that people with a high need for privacy are less attracted to a stranger in a high demand situation than in a low demand one, compared with those with a low need for privacy. Nor can it be concluded that people are more or less attracted to strangers following intimate versus nonintimate self-disclosure based upon the lack of significant main effects of situational variations upon interpersonal attraction.

Behavioral interaction. The differential effects of Tasks I and II for privacy preference groups upon behavioral interaction were assessed using the behavioral indicators described above. Analyses of variance on the behavioral measures revealed no significant need for privacy by situation interactions in interpersonal interaction. No significant differences on interpersonal interaction indices were found either for the main effect of

situations. There it cannot be concluded that people with a high need for privacy interact less with a stranger in a high demand situation than in a low demand one, compared with those having low privacy needs. In addition, there is no evidence that people interact any differently with a stranger following intimate versus non-intimate self-disclosure.

Relative to the raters' perception of the quality of the interaction, there was no significant difference between situations and no significant differences between any interaction of situation, privacy preferences or sex. Thus, it cannot be concluded that the interactions of high privacy individuals with a stranger are less smooth, natural, and relaxed in a high demand situation than in a low demand situation, compared with those of low privacy individuals.

Other Effects

No significant effects of sex nor significant interactions of sex with other variables were found in the analyses.

Discussion

Privacy Preference

The behavior of individuals scoring high on the privacy preference scale compared with those scoring low was judged by observers to be significantly more unnatural, tense, and awkward when interacting with a stranger. This observation was supported by the finding that high privacy individuals use significantly fewer verbal reinforcements than low privacy individuals. Verbal reinforcements by the subject could occur only as a result of prior verbalizations by the confederate. Since the confederates were trained not to initiate any interaction, this means that the subjects spoke first to the

confederate and then used verbal reinforcers as the stranger spoke in return. Verbal reinforcements may have reflected to the confederates an active interest by the subjects in what the confederates were saying. It may also have been a means of encouraging more conversation by the confederates. The above relationship is supported by the finding that duration of verbalizations by the subject was strongly related to the frequency of their verbal reinforcers.

The results of this study suggest that need for privacy does not have implications for the degree to which one is attracted to other people. High privacy individuals appear to have an equal desire to get to know others as low privacy individuals, but they may lack the interpersonal skills necessary for relationship development. Perhaps individuals with a high need for privacy receive negative feedback from others as a result of some deficiencies in interpersonal skills, and this negative feedback causes them to need and seek privacy. An alternative explanation is that individuals with a high need for privacy do not get enough practice interacting with others and so do not learn the necessary social skills. A third possibility is that they have the social skills but were not interested in using them. More research is needed to determine the relationship between social skills and need for privacy.

Since, based upon the present study, high need for privacy individuals have less smooth and natural social interactions, it may be of interest to determine if privacy preferences would change as a result of interpersonal skills training. It would also be helpful to know how need for privacy is related to shyness and social avoidance since Haynes (1979) has shown that

it is possible to teach shy people interpersonal skills which results in improved feelings about self.

Interaction of Situation and Privacy Preferences

The manipulation of situational demands upon privacy did not significantly affect any of the dependent variables, nor did the interaction of situation and privacy preferences influence interpersonal behavior. When individuals were asked to self-disclose on intimate compared with non-intimate topics they did report significantly more privacy infringement at the conclusion of the 5-minute self disclosure. However, they did not obtain higher anxiety scores than individuals who were asked to self-disclose on non-intimate subjects. It may be that this privacy infringe-situation was not extreme enough to produce high anxiety and a subsequent reduction of interaction and attraction for those with high privacy preferences.

With respect to situational demands upon privacy, Goffman (1961) studied the environments of "total institutions" such as asylums and prisons and found that individuals' privacy was continually infringed upon in that people were constantly surveyed and intimate conversations were often tape-recorded. The situations Goffman described represent a much more intense, varied, and prolonged infringement upon privacy than was represented in the present study, and this may explain why his subjects increase in anxiety level while those in the present study did not. The results of this study reveal a need for more data on how different degrees of self disclosure invluence individuals' attraction and interaction with others, as well as other aspects of functioning.

The lack of anxiety associated with the manipulation of privacy in this study may suggest that people have adapted to infringement upon privacy by self-disclosure. More information is needed on how other types of situational variations in privacy in intimate and non-intimate relationships affect interpersonal behavior.

Finally, the results have implications for future work on the role of self disclosure in the relationship development process. In an ongoing relationship, it has been proposed that relationship satisfaction is related in a curvilinear fashion to self disclosure in that the most satisfied couples report moderate to high rather than extrememly high or low levels of self disclosure (Taylor, 1979). Less is known about the implications of level of self disclosure for behavioral interaction or interpersonal attraction in the initial stages of a relationship. There was no evidence in the present study that interaction or attraction vary as a function of level of self disclosure (moderately high or low), but these conclusions are limited to information from the speaker (rather than speaker and listener both) in a non-voluntary self-disclosure task. However, this paradigm may be useful in determining the conditions under which self-disclosure does have an impact upon ease of interaction and attraction in initial encounters through such task variations as the substitution of a naive subject for the confederate in the listener role, the altering of degree of perceived voluntarism on level of self-disclosure, and varying the level of intimacy of the self disclosure topics.

Footnotes

[1]The distribution of these variables was either bimodal or trimodal. For example, people tended to either ask no questions during the 5-minute unstructured period or ask 3-4 questions. Those asking none were scored "0" and those asking 3-4 were scored "1."

Reference Notes

1. Haase, R. F. Experimentwise error rate protection in multivariable, univariate analyses. Duplicated manuscript, Texas Tech University, 1980.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations on the Behavior Interaction Indicators and Analyses of Variance for Privacy Preference Groups*

Behavioral Interaction Indicators**	Privacy Preference Group		p
	High (n=37)	Low (n=40)	
Smoothness of interaction			
Mean	7.23	12.51	
S.D.	2.13	7.99	.009
Frequency of verbal reinforcers			
Mean	0.18	0.45	.012
S.D.	0.39	0.50	
Frequency of questions			
Mean	0.16	0.40	.021
S.D.	0.37	0.49	
Duration of verbalizations			
Mean	0.76	1.15	.037
S.D.	0.79	0.83	
Frequency of laughter			
Mean	0.88	1.17	.128
S.D.	0.85	0.75	
Duration of directed gaze			
Mean	0.83	1.10	.172
S.D.	0.76	0.87	

Table 1 (Continued)

Behavioral Interaction Indicators*	Privacy Preference Group		p
	High (n=37)	Low (n=40)	
Duration of laughter			
Mean	0.21	0.35	.185
S.D.	0.41	0.48	
Duration of gesture			
Mean	0.27	0.35	.438
S.D.	0.45	0.48	
Frequency of gesture			
Mean	0.27	0.35	.438
S.D.	0.45	0.48	

*For the 5-minute unstructured period
**All duration measures are in seconds.